

Message Text

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SUBJ: REPERCUSSIONS IN AFGHANISTAN OF EVENTS IN S.E. ASIA

REF: STATE 107027

1. SUMMARY: FEW AFGHANS HAVE BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED BY CONCRETE EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, OR EVEN IN IDEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THESE EVENTS. OF GREATEST CONCERN, ESPECIALLY TO AFGHAN LEADERSHIP, IS EXTENT TO WHICH EVENTS MIGHT SIGNAL OR PRESAGE CHANGES IN GREAT POWER RELATIONSHIPS. AFGHANS HAVE CONCLUDED, WE BELIEVE, THAT APPARENT DEFEAT OF UNITED STATES PURPOSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DOES NOT IMPLY GENERALLY WEAKENING US WILL OR INTEREST IN WORLD AFFAIRS. THEY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT UNITED STATES INTEREST IN AND ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR COUNTRY'S WELLBEING, AND TO BELIEVE AS WELL THAT US IS CAPABLE AND WILLING TMANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY AFGH-ANISTAN'S LIMITED CALL UPON IT. WE SEE NO IMMEDIATE NOR FAR-REACHING CHANGES IN AFGHANISTAN'S POLICIES OR GENERAL ORIENTATION AS A RESULT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN EVENTS, ALTHOUGH THESE EVENTS MAY REINFORCE EXISTING AFGHAN TENDENCIES TO SEEK ADDITIONAL SECURITY WITHIN THE FAMILY OF ISLAMIC NATIONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ARE OF CONSEQUENCE TO AFGHANS ONLY

INSOFAR AS THEY SIGNAL NEW GREAT POWER RELATIONSHIPS. THIS IS AN ENDURING FACT WHICH SHOULD NOT BE OBSCURED BY AFGHANISTAN'S HAVING LONG AGO ADOPTED TYPICALLY THIRD WORLD POSITIONS WITH REGARD TO REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT REMAINS AN ENDURING FACT ALTHOUGH AFGHAN DIPLOMACY APPEARS TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE ISLAMIC NATIONS, WITH THEIR NEW FOUND MONEY AND POWER, REPRESENT AN INCREASINGLY POWERFUL BLOC IN WHICH AFGHANISTAN CAN FIND A NICHE AND LIVE LESS EXPOSED THAN IN THE OLD, BI-POLAR WORLD.

3. AFGHANS VIEW UNITED STATES AS ULTIMATE COUNTERWEIGHT TO THEIR INDEPENDENCE BEING ERODED (PERHAPS OUT OF EXISTENCE) BY THE SIZE AND PROXIMITY OF SOVIET UNION. NEVER MIND THAT THERE IS NO US-AFGHAN DEFENSE TREATY. AFGHANS IN THEIR HEART OF HEARTS TAKE VISIBLE UNITED STATES INTEREST IN THEIR COUNTRY (PRINCIPALLY AS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE) AS AN AMULET INSCRIBED TO AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE. THUS AFGHANS WERE MUCH MORE CONCERNED OVER WHAT APPEARED A US DEFEAT THAN THEY WERE OVER THE CONCRETE FATE OF ANY GROUP OF SOUTHEAST ASIANS, OR OVER THE IDEOLOGY BY WHICH THIS FATE WAS TO BE ACHIEVED. US DEFEAT HAD TO BE EVALUATED AS AN OMEN FOR OTHER SMALL NATIONS IN SOME WAY DEPENDENT UPON IT.

4. THIS EVALUATION WAS NOT LIGHTLY UNDEERTAKEN. KABUL 2560 DESCRIBED THE CONSIDERABLE DISMAY OF AFGHAN JOURNALISTS AS THEY SORTED THEIR THOUGHTS AT THE MOMENT OF AMERICAN DEFEAT. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SOUTHEAST ASIAN EVENTS WERE DISCUSSED WHEN DAOUD PAID HIS LATE APRIL VISIT TO THE SHAH. A HIGH AFGHAN OFFICIAL MADE POINT OF TELLING OUR AMBASSADOR DURING SAME PERIOD THAT AMERICAN POLITICAL AND MORAL SUPPORT CONTINUED TO BE VITAL FOR AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE, JUST AS AMERICA'S ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WAS IMPORTANT IN SOLVING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH GIVE RISE TO COMMUNIST PENETRATION.

5. RESULT OF THIS EVALUATION IS, WE BELIEVE, REAFFIRMED CONFIDENCE. THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY THIS RESULT OBTAINED, NOT LAEAST OF WHICH IS FACT THAT AFGHAN LEADERSHIP IS CONSIDERABLY MATURE, HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE, AND STRICTLY NON-IDEOLOGICAL. DAOUD, FOR EXAMPLE, IS A PRAGMATIST WHO TOLD OUR AMBASSADOR IN EFFECT "YOU BACKED THE WRONG HORSE, A REGIME CONFIDENTIAL

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LACKING SUPPORT OF ITS PEOPLE". HE CLEARLY HARBORS NO APOCALYPTIC VIEWS ON AMERICA'S DEMISE OR SUDDEN NEED FOR AFGHANISTAN TO RE-ORIENT ITS POLICIES. CONTRIBUTING ALSO TO THIS REAFFIRMED CONFIDENCE IS THAT THAT US, ENTIRELY AS SEPARATE MATTER BUT INCIDENTALLY OCCURRING TIMEWISE WITHIN SOUTHEAST ASIAN TIME OF TROUBLES, REAFFIRMED ITS INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE UNDERTAKINGS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE AFGHANS. IF THEY SPECULATE UPON SUCH THINGS, AFGHAN

LEADERS MIGHT SURMISE THAT VIEWED FROM MANILA OR BANGKOK EXTENT OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT COULD BE PERCEIVED WANTING IN TERMS OF NEEDS OF THOSE COUNTRIES. BUT VIEWED FROM KABUL US COMMITMENT AND STRENGTH CLEARLY IMPLY WE CAN ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY AFGHAN REQUIREMENTS.

6. IN ANSWER TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED IN STATE REFTEL:

A) AFGHAN OFFICIALS PROFESS TO FIND EVENTS IN SE ASIA GREAT BOON TO CHINESE, A VIEW WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN FED BY THE RUSSIANS HERE IN FURTHERANCE OF SPECIFIC SOVIET INTEREST. WE DOUBT THERE ARE PECULIARLY AFGHAN INTERPRETATIONS OF SE ASIAN EVENTS, OR THAT THERE IS A PECULIARLY DESIRED OUTCOME.

B) AFGHAN SENSE OF SECURITY WILL BE UNAFFECTED, VIS-A-VIS THE USSR AND THE PRC, PROVIDED THE AMERICAN AMUNLET IS NOT REMOVED.

C) AS NOTED ABOVE, AFGHANS HAVE BEEN SEEKING GRATER SECURITY WITHIN FAMILY OF ISLAMIC NATIONS. THIS IS A TREND WHICH PREDATES COLLAPSE OF NON-COMMUNIST REGIMES IN INDOCHINA BUT WHICH WILL BE REINFORCED WHETHER OR NOT THE AFGHANS PERCEIVE THAT THE US ABILITY TO RESTRAIN THE SOVIETS HAS BEEN DIMINISHED. CONCEIVABLY THIS COULD ALSO PROMOTE AFGHAN INTEREST IN RAPPROCHMENT WITH PAKISTAN, BUT OTHER MORE LOCAL FACTORS WILL PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THAT QUARREL.

D) AFGHAN GOVERNMENT LONG AGO ADOPTED POSITION OF TRAVELLING AS FULLY INTEGRATED MEMBER OF "GROUP OF 77", THIRD WORLD, ETC. NO CHANGES FORESEEN.

E) AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH SE ASIAN STATES WILL LIKELY CONTINUE ENTHUSIASTIC IN GENERALITIES AND THIN ON SUBSTANCE.
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AFGHANS WILL CONTINUE TO VOTE FOR SE ASIAN REPRESENTATION IN WORLD FORUMS (OF WHATEVER KIND).

F) EVEN IF AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHES EMBASSIES IN SE ASIA, WHICH BUT FOR BUDGETARY REASONS WE ASSUME THEY WOULD BE PLEASED TO DO SO, WE BELIEVE MOST MEANINGFUL ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND SE ASIAN GOVERNMENTS WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE PLACE IN SUCH INTERNATIONAL FORUMS AS UN AND ITS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, GROUP OF 77, ETC., WHERE MULTILATERAL, GLOBAL PROBLEMS HAVE PRECEDENCE. WE DO NOT FORESEE AFGHANISTAN'S ATTEMPTING TO FORGE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS.
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